DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 356 435 CG 024 830

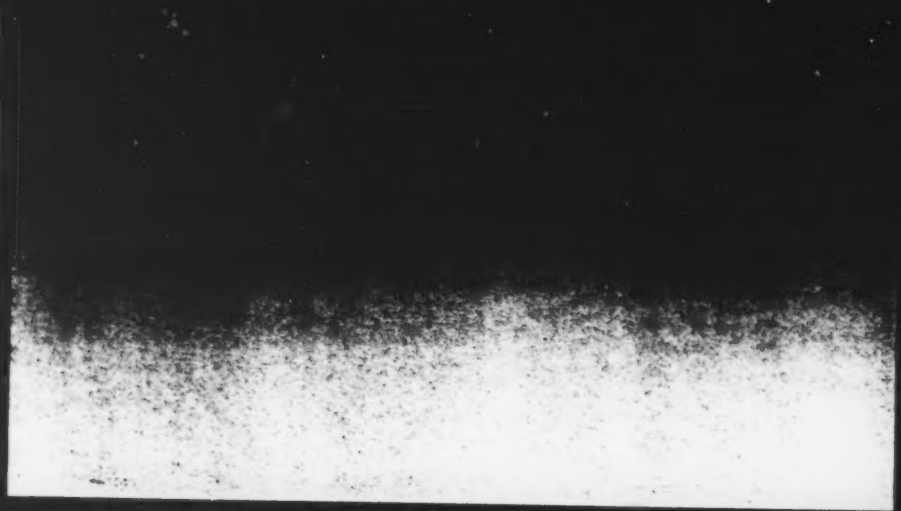
| | |
|---|---|
| TITLE | Pathway to Tomorrow: Preparing Today's Children for Success. |
| INSTITUTION | National Association of School Psychologists, Washington, DC. |
| PUB DATE | [90] |
| NOTE | 12p. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | National Association of School Psychologists, 8455 Colesville Road, Suite 1000, Silver Spring, MD 20910. |
| PUB TYPE | Reports - General (140) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Children; *Counselor Role; Elementary Secondary Education; School Counseling; *School Psychologists; Student Needs |

ABSTRACT

All American school children are growing up in a world that makes them significantly "at-risk" for educational and social failure due to various factors including: poverty, changing family structure, homelessness, hunger, poor health care, prenatal drug and alcohol exposure, increased incidence of child abuse and neglect, teenage pregnancy, racism, and violence in schools and communities. School psychologists are specially trained mental health professionals who work with preschoolers, children, adolescents, teachers, and families. They work with all school personnel to help make education a positive and rewarding experience, and to improve students' academic and social achievements. School psychologists want these things for children, families, and schools: (1) being prepared to learn; (2) safe schools; (3) prevention; (4) access to services for all children and families; (5) involving the family in school; (6) schools must welcome all children; and (7) student success. School psychologists provide information and recommendations regarding specific issues to legislators concerned about the welfare of children. School psychologists conduct studies on policies affecting children and youth. School psychologists are committed to the belief that all children must be mentally and physically healthy and educated so that they may benefit from and contribute to the full social and economic rewards America has to offer, and to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex world. (ABL)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED356435



# Pathway to Tomorrow

CG024830

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN **OTHER THAN PAPER COPY** HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Richard Yep

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# *Factors Affecting Today's School Children*

All American school children are growing up in a world that makes them significantly "at-risk" for educational and social failure due to various factors including: poverty, changing family structure, homelessness, hunger, poor health care, prenatal drug and alcohol exposure, increased incidence of child abuse and neglect, teenage pregnancy, racism, and violence in schools and communities. The Children's Defense Fund (1990) states that "the mounting crisis of our children and families is a rebuke to everything America professes to be. It also will bring America to its economic knees and increase violence and discord within this country unless we confront it." Since the future of our social structure and economic health depends on our children, we must immediately make an investment in this most valuable resource.

Families today have fewer means to provide for their children, less time to devote to their care and nurturing, and fewer informal social supports. At-risk children are found among every income group. Too many children grow up in families whose lives are in turmoil, where parents are too stressed to provide the nurturing, structure, and security that protect them and prepare them for adulthood. The burden of maintaining a decent standard of living (especially for single-parent households) has become so great that many families are economically vulnerable. These children too often arrive at school hungry, inadequately or inappropriately dressed, unhealthy, and fatigued. This leaves them unfocused and

unprepared to learn, thus increasing the chances that, over the years, they are more likely to be held back or to drop out of school.

A 1986 report by the United States Congress, Office of Technology Assessment estimated that almost eight million, or 12 percent, of all children have significant emotional or behavioral problems warranting the use of mental health services in the schools. If unattended to, these problems will continue to have tragic consequences for schools, children, and their families. These aftereffects include increased crime, illiteracy, and a perpetuation of the cycle of poverty in which many American school children are trapped. These societal factors, coupled with a "one-size-fits-all" educational model pose significant challenges for schools attempting to prepare students to be positive contributors to society.

To face these challenges, effective school psychological services are critical in improving the lives of children. Children must have their basic social and emotional needs fulfilled before they can truly focus on academic learning. Since they have access to virtually all children, schools are the natural setting in which to intervene to ensure social, behavioral, and educational success.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) believes that every child can and will learn, that every child's quality of life can be improved and that our educational system must prepare all children to become literate and motivated workers, caring family members, and responsible citizens.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## *Who are School Psychologists?*

**School psychologists are specially trained** mental health professionals who work with pre-schoolers, children, adolescents, teachers, and families. They work with all school personnel to help make education a positive and rewarding experience, and to improve students' academic and social achievements.

The training requirements to become a school psychologist are:

- ❑ a minimum of 60 graduate semester hours
- ❑ a year-long internship
- ❑ preparation in mental health, child development, learning, motivation, and evaluation
- ❑ certification and/or licensure by the state in which services are provided; school psychologists also may be nationally certified by the National School Psychology Certification Board.

**School psychologists focus** on the factors that influence individual differences, normal and abnormal development, and emotional health. The fact that their assessments and intervention strategies (designed to improve conditions for children and families) are based on scientific research make school psychologists unique among school-based mental health providers.

## *What School Psychologists Want for Children, Families, and Schools*

### *✓Being Prepared to Learn*

The varied social, emotional, and academic needs of students must be met through caring, personalized school environments. Schools should foster autonomy, social responsibility, and respect for human rights.

**School psychologists help** educators understand and develop programs and curricula that respond to individual differences and the varied ways in which children learn.

## ✓Safe Schools

Schools must provide a safe and healthy learning environment free from fear of physical and emotional harm. Although some school districts have banned the use of corporal punishment by educators, not all American children are guaranteed this protection by law. All children, no matter where they live, must attend schools where physical punishment in the name of discipline is a thing of the past. Research shows that corporal punishment is ineffective in controlling behavior, may create long-lasting emotional and psychological trauma, and is related to higher dropout rates, increased vandalism, and violence.

**School psychologists teach** students and staff about peaceful ways to resolve conflicts, strategies for managing and coping with crises, effective communication skills, and non-injurious discipline methods.

## ✓Prevention

Addressing problems before they become crises is the most efficient and cost-effective way to meet the needs of troubled families and vulnerable children. Lending help before a problem arises benefits children, their families, and society by thwarting later learning and behavior difficulties, increasing a family's ability to provide for itself, and reducing costs of later education and mental health treatment.

**School psychologists help to identify needs** and develop programs that prevent problems before they occur.

> *A school psychologist joined with a parent's group to advocate for the availability of affordable, high quality early childhood care and education. They argued that these services help avert later social, emotional, and educational difficulties that may arise from children being left unsupervised or in settings where the conditions are poor.*

## ✓Access to Services for All Children and Families

The current delivery of services to children who might fail in our educational system must be changed. Children who need services too often "fall through the cracks." Alternatives that increase access and reduce

barriers to effective instruction must be developed. Staff trained to provide appropriate mental health services should be available in all schools.

**School psychologists work with others** concerned with the welfare of school children: policy makers, teachers, administrators, social workers, counselors, and nurses. These professionals use their expertise and influence to ensure that the educational, physical and mental health needs of children are met.

## ✓*Involving the Family in School*

All parents value education. Partnerships among parents, children, and schools help to ensure that the rights of all students to an appropriate education are honored. Parents should be involved at all levels of decision making regarding their child's education. Empowered families are more receptive to new ideas and educational innovations. Schools should be family friendly, responsive, and inviting for all parents and other caretakers.

**School psychologists develop and encourage** home-school relationships which make families a part of the educational process to help ensure students' success.

> *Bertha was not completing homework assignments and was making poor grades. The school psychologist taught Bertha's parents ways to encourage and reward her interest and participation in school. Bertha now is an "A" student.*

## ✓*Schools Must Welcome All Children*

More and more children from diverse ethnic, racial, religious, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds are entering our schools. Educators

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

can no longer continue to respond as though all school children in America are white, middle class, and English-speaking. Cultural diversity is one of America's riches; it must be respected and preserved. Individual differences must be recognized and accommodated so that all children have equal opportunity to succeed in school.

**School psychologists develop and implement** assessments and interventions that take into account individuals' cultural differences, and are nondiscriminatory in terms of gender, ethnicity, native language, family composition, and/or socioeconomic status.

## ✓*Student Success*

Measurable educational and social achievements, or "outcomes," help children meet their maximum potential as learners, citizens, community and family members. That is, what have students learned? Are they literate? Can they fill out job applications? Do they know how to read and follow directions? Can they complete a tax form? Can they work cooperatively and cope with frustration? Have they attained the critical thinking and analytical skills necessary to make effective decisions and function successfully in American society?

Curricula must be meaningful and relevant to students; tedious and irrelevant curriculum are directly related to high dropout rates. We must acknowledge the devastating economic and social impact of high student dropout rates and students graduating without mastering necessary skills. These factors have greatly reduced our ability to compete economically in domestic and international markets.

While schools move toward an emphasis on students' achievements, state and national government agencies are reducing the monitoring of schools. Schools must be responsive to and accountable for ensuring that children are learning what they need to know.

**School psychologists help** educators develop reality-based, practical models for assisting students in the transition from school to work. They work directly with students in the planning and decision-making process for apprenticeship, vocational and college preparation. School psychologists are expert in assisting students in developing the positive attitude,

study habits, and social values necessary for employment and responsible citizenship.

> *Kevin entered high school angry, withdrawn, and unable to read. A comprehensive program was designed by a team led by a school psychologist that included Kevin, his parent, and his teachers. The plan included remedial education, therapy, consultation, and service coordination. Now Kevin is working and learning. He has passed the functional tests (including reading) required to earn a diploma.*

## How School Psychologists can Assist Policy Makers

By virtue of their specialized training in education and mental health, school psychologists can help determine the social, emotional, and psychological factors that influence children's development and identify internal and external threats to social and educational achievements.

School psychologists provide information and recommendations regarding specific issues to legislators concerned about the welfare of children. They assist in planning and drafting legislation, coordinate responses to proposals, write and present testimony at congressional hearings, advocate for better services and adequate funding, and provide access to a strong network of affiliate groups which can be called upon for assistance at the state and local levels. School psychologists participate in numerous coalitions, and share an ability to communicate with Congress and education and mental health organizations. School psychologists support the assignment to committees of members whose records are consistent with the interests of children and families.

School psychologists conduct studies on policies affecting children and youth. They communicate with government officials and/or staff about the results of their research, and are committed to ensuring that committee reports, especially conference committee reports, contain language that conveys the intent to help children. In addition, school psychologists

monitor and work with state agencies responsible for implementing new laws and drafting regulations.

> *A federal policy maker wanted to introduce legislation to ensure that schools offered a safe environment for children. A school psychologist worked with the legislator's staff in drafting sample language for a bill that would eliminate corporal punishment in schools.*

## About NASP

The National Association of School Psychologists represents over 16,000 school psychologists and allied professionals nationwide and abroad. NASP serves its members and society by:

- Promoting the rights, welfare, education, and mental health of children and youth
- Advancing the profession of school psychology.

This is accomplished through education, service, research, and policy development.

School psychologists are committed to the belief that all children must be mentally and physically healthy and educated so that they may benefit from and contribute to the full social and economic rewards America has to offer, and to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex world. This can occur only when policies and programs make improving the lives of children a priority.

---

### References


Children's Defense Fund. (1990). *S.O.S. America! A Children's Defense Budget.* Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund.

U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment. (1986). *Problems & Services–Background Paper.* (Report No. OTA-BP-8-33). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.


### Photo credits

***Page 1:*** Courtesy of the National Science Resources Center.
(Photo by Rick Vargas, Smithsonian Institution Office of Photographic Services.)
***Page 2:*** Courtesy of the National Science Resources Center.
(Photo by Richard Strauss, Smithsonian Institution Office of Photographic Services.)
***Page 5:*** Courtesy of Montgomery County Maryland Public Schools. (Photo by Bill Mills.)

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

8455 Colesville Road
Suite 1000
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Ph: 301-608-0500 Fax: 301-608-2514

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS
8455 Colesville Road, Suite 1000
Silver Spring, MD 20910